

# Blues hit back after first half shocker

By **STUART EARP** Wycombe Wanderers 4, Leytonstone 3

WHEN Wycombe Wanderers jumped into a 2-0 lead after only four minutes on Saturday, they looked to be cruising to a handsome victory. But a marvellous comeback by lowly Leytonstone put them 3-2 up before the break and it was only two cracking goals in the second half that secured the three Rothmans-Isthmian League points for the Blues.

There were certainly some exciting moments in this game but despite the 4-3 scoreline, there were also long periods when mistakes were rife from both sides. Nevertheless, we shouldn't complain when seven goals are served up — and several of them were superbly taken.

Wycombe's football for the first 20 minutes was as good as anything they have played this season. First time passing into space, players running intelligently and top class finishing put them two up in no time and it could have been 3-0 in seven minutes when Dave Alexander hit an upright.

But as so often happens when the Blues are on top, they allowed their game to slip, became over elaborate and suddenly went from 2-0 up to 2-3 down. In the later stages of the first half, when Leytonstone scored their goals, the defence looked unusually suspect and poor Peter Spittle was often left virtually coverless. John Delaney was sorely missed, especially in the air where John Brooks gave Dave Bullock no end of trouble. It was odd that the defence, which had played so well at Staines last Tuesday, should suddenly open up but they buckled down in the second half to help secure the victory.

Despite this win, Wanderers drop to third place as Dagenham beat Hitchin 1-0 last night (Monday) to take over the leadership. Hendon, meanwhile, seem to be dropping out of the race following some internal problems at the club.

Wanderers got off to a cracking start and went a goal up after two minutes. From their first corner, Dylan Evans headed the ball on at the near post. Keith Mead threaded a pass through the defence and Geoff Anthony got the faintest of touches to deflect a soft goal past Gary Grant.

Within two minutes, the 'Stones' were trapped again by Wycombe's free running football. Ray Eaton sent over a dangerous cross from the byeline and with the defence in a tangle, Anthony slipped the ball to Mick Holifield who sent a

powerful drive past Grant's outstretched hand.

Wanderers continued the assault as the visitors struggled to get a grip on the game. Dave Alexander, who had a fine match all round, was the unluckiest man on the pitch when he climbed brilliantly to Evans' cross. The header was near perfect and left Grant stranded, but the ball thumped against the base of the right hand upright.

Three goals might have been too much for Leytonstone to pull back but with Wycombe's momentum slowly ebbing away, they staged a remarkable rally that completely unnerved the home defence. Keeping their game simple, they played to their strengths — big John Brooks and skilful winger Steve King.

After 30 minutes, their perseverance paid dividends. Spittle had divine bravery at King's feet at the expense of a corner and from the flag kick Wycombe were slow to clear the ball away. As it bounced inside the six yard box, centre back Mike Smith headed home.

There was hardly a murmur to acclaim the Stones' goal and the crowd were even more shocked when they equalised three minutes later. Again the defence must take the blame for not clearing the danger. This time Chris Brooks headed down for his namesake John to stab home from close range.

When Leytonstone took the lead in the 39th minute few could believe that such a transformation had taken place. In eight minutes Wanderers had seen all their early work wasted. The third Leytonstone goal came from Chris Brooks. King skipped round the defence and crossed from the bye-line to the far post where Brooks beat Eaton to the ball and netted.

As you can imagine, Leytonstone were cockaeroop after half time and far more confident at the back. It was obvious Wanderers had a real fight on their hands if they were to pull the game out of the fire.

The Blues continued to struggle in the early stages of the half but a tactical switch by manager Brian Lee suddenly sparked new life into his players. Lee decided to pull Holifield, who was most unhappy up front, back into midfield and push Howard Kennedy into the forward line. Almost immediate-

ly the move paid off. Alexander's 40 yard through ball put Kennedy clear but his square pass was completely missed by Evans. He recovered well to centre the ball but Anthony clipped over the top. Geoff was to make amends later.

In the 64th minute, he produced a flash of real brilliance when he brought the ball down on the edge of the box, turned, and sent a dipping volley into the corner of the net. It was a thoroughly deserved goal for the Welshman, who was my man of the match.

Now back on level terms, Wycombe began to dominate again and the fourth goal after 72 minutes was fittingly the winner. Eaton's inswinging corner was headed through by Terry Reardon. Kennedy had his back to the goal from 10 yards range but lent back and sent a superb overhead kick past Grant's fingertips and into the corner of the net.

Holifield was only inches away from a fifth goal two minutes later as Wanderers finished firmly in the driving seat, having kept their supporters on tenterhooks for much of the game.

**WYCOMBE:** P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, D. Bullock, R. Eaton; D. Alexander, T. Reardon, H. Kennedy; M. Holifield, D. Evans, G. Anthony. Sub. A. Horseman (not used).

**LEYTONSTONE:** G. Grant; D. Warden, J. Smith, M. Smith, L. Tilley; S. Lucas, L. Rayner, R. Mitchell; C. Brooks (sub. C. Brown 80 mins.), J. Brooks, S. King.

**Referee:** B. Robinson (Ashford).  
**Half-time:** 2-3. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Anthony 2 (2, 64), Holifield (4), Kennedy (72). **Leytonstone** — M. Smith (31), J. Brooks (34), C. Brooks (39).  
**Attendance:** 950.

## ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

	(Up to and inc. 6/4/76)											Pen Pts
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	CD				
Dagenham	33	20	6	7	75	41	66	20				
Dulwich	38	20	5	13	60	33	65	58				
Wycombe	35	19	8	8	55	37	65	20				
Ilford	33	19	6	8	47	28	63	90				
Slough	38	17	10	11	57	41	61	84				
Staines	38	18	7	11	44	29	61	50				
Enfield	28	17	7	4	55	21	58	64				
Hendon	35	16	10	9	48	32	58	34				
L'head	35	16	8	11	58	48	56	70				
Sutton	33	15	10	8	60	41	55	20				
Tooting	32	16	7	9	53	34	55	90				
Hitchin	38	13	9	16	42	50	48	10				
Hayes	38	10	17	11	41	42	47	74				
Woking	39	13	8	18	52	67	47	84				
W'stown	38	12	10	16	43	56	46	90				
Kings	36	13	7	16	49	75	46	40				
Barking	36	13	8	17	51	57	45	68				
Bishop's	33	10	9	14	36	37	39	20				
Oxford	36	8	19	26	63	32	34	34				
L'stone	37	10	20	33	59	31	30	50				
Southall	35	7	8	20	42	59	29	50				
Clapton	39	2	2	35	15	108	8	90				